

# La Vigna

VOLUME XI

SUMMER/AUTUMN ISSUE

OCTOBER 1994

## ENGAGEMENT ANNOUNCED



Recently Louis and Celine Kiefer of Robbinsville announced the engagement of their daughter Kristin C. Kiefer to Mark L. Chianese. Mark is the son of Gary T. and Rose I. Chianese of Hamilton Township and the grandson of Leo and Louise Chianese of Creamridge NJ. A June wedding is planned.

## TWO SISTERS

Two very remarkable women: Jennie Bilancio and Rose Bilancio. I always enjoyed watching my Mom (JBI) and my Aunt Rose (RB) interact with each other. I especially loved to listen and see them laugh together...laughter that often erupted from their memories of Elmer Street. Then one day, probably during an intimate picnic at Eggerts Road on a summer's eve, I realized they were sisters. Just like me and Carol. Just like Beaty and Clara. Just like us!

Until then I had thought of Aunt Rose as Aunt Rose and my Mom as my Mom. An interrelationship between the two of them was more than my child's brain could fathom. My Aunt. My Mother. I loved them both but never thought about them as being sisters... Sisters who shared secrets. Sisters who  
(continued on page 2)

## BOB'S SURPRISE BIRTHDAY PARTY

And was he surprised! We tricked him by not having it on his actual birthday. It was Roberta Immordino, his daughter from California, and Carolyn MacLeod, his daughter from Connecticut, who put their heads together (by telephone that is) and made deceivers and connivers of so many of his family and friends so it could be a real surprise.

The party was held on Saturday, August 20 at Dorothea's House (which is also 80 years old this year) in Princeton. It was attended by 65 guests. There were daughter Roberta and her son Robert, daughter Carolyn and husband Jim (Dean of Kent School, Connecticut) with their daughters Jaime from the Kent School and Carrie, home from college in Maine. (continued on page 2)

## SCOTT CHIANESE, GRADUATES TSC



Scott Chianese, son of Robert & Susan Chianese and grandson of Louise & Leo Chianese, graduated from Trenton State College May 20, 1994. He earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in History and was on the Dean's List. He was also inducted into Phi Alpha Theta, the National History Honors Society. Scott plans to continue graduate studies at Rutgers University.

## ARUGOLA - A SPECIAL OFFER

This year Angelo Chianese and his father grew more arugola than they ever have before with the ancestor seeds from Grandpop Joe Bilancio. They let enough go to seed to be able to make the following special offer:

If you would like to grow some of this delicious salad green in your own garden next spring, please send a self-addressed envelope to Angelo/John Chianese c/o LaVigna, 90 Eggerts Crossing Road, Lawrenceville NJ 08648. If you can afford to send a \$1 donation to LaVigna, please do so.

These seeds are powerful. They are guaranteed to grow and, if you allow a portion of them to go to seed, you will be able to pass them on to your friends and

(Continued on page 3)

## A SMALL NEW MEMBER OF THE FAMILY

We were blessed with a baby girl on October 6 at 1:40 a.m., Copenhagen time (8:40 p.m., October 5, New Jersey time). She entered the world with puffy cheeks, dark blue/grey eyes and a full head of hair--at least an inch long, with long sideburns. Her weight was 3300 grams/7 lbs 3 1/2 oz and length 52 cm/20 inches.

We haven't chosen her name yet--we'll keep you posted. According to Danish tradition, any babies who aren't named within 6 months of birth automatically receive the queen's or king's name. The current queen is named Margrethe. Although as a dual citizen, perhaps she should also be named Hilary?

Corinne Bilancio and  
Peter Schoning  
Rosenorrs Alle 53, 2 t.v.  
1970 Frederiksberg C





### BOB IMMORDINO'S SURPRISE BIRTHDAY PARTY

(Cont'd from p.1)

Bob's sisters, Mrs. Josephine Pardi (Trenton) and Mrs. Marge Pieczynski who came from Florida, were present, along with many cousins, nephews and nieces.

Jennie Immordino (nee Bilancio) was there of course, with her brother Lew and sister Lorraine and cousins and nieces.

The affair was elegantly catered personally by Mrs. Nancy DeMeglio, owner of Francesco's Restaurant in Trenton. Even the weather cooperated. A successful celebration indeed.

Roberta's son Robert, who turned 8 years old, told his mother, "Eighty years old is no deal--now 90, that's a big deal." Roberta told the gathering, "Let's plan to celebrate again in 10 years."



### TWO SISTERS (Continued from page 1)

shared clothes. Sisters who cried together. Sisters who walked together. Sisters who argued. Sisters who laughed until they cried. Sisters who loved deeply.

I went for a walk once past 252 Elmer Street with my Mom, Aunt Rose, and Aunt Lorraine. "Hey, Ro!" my mother beckoned to her. "Remember this?" My mother knowingly sought with her fingers the familiar hole in the stone stairway. She and Aunt Rose shared a deep smile from the past. I touched the indentation too, wanting to join them in that golden memory.

(More in another issue) Roberta Immordino



July 20, 1994

Readers of LaVigna, please take note of the information sent by Sam Bellardo, Director of International Studies Program in Italy at Kutztown University. (See page 4.) It is an opportunity that you will not want to miss.

This past summer I was fortunate to be a part of the group which went to Montecatini Terme for three weeks of study, travel good company, delightful food, fine music and never-ending opportunities to learn the differences and the similarities of that delightful place in the world called ITALY.

Since Sam is the director of the program, it is also time to get to be with a member of our family whom we do not see enough. You will enjoy and treasure all of your time with this talented, kind and perceptive man.

When I think about Italy, I think of two quotations from members of this ever-expanding family: at one of the dinners that Mom and Dad (Rose and Lou Bilancio) had at 90 Eggerts Road, someone asked Dad, "What if you were not Italian? What would you be?" "Very sad!" he replied... And this summer in Italy, when we were talking about traveling to renew our roots, perhaps going to Ireland, or England, or Spain, wherever, Sam's comment was, "When you think about it, Italy is everybody's roots."

So renew and reward yourself this May and June with a well-planned and delightful experience.

Willie Bilancio

Note to Dr. Ralph Garzio and Diana--I'm happy to hear the tiger lilies are doing well. I hope the flowers and your happiness multiply. See you at the 1995 LaVigna Picnic! Clara

Dear LaVigna,

Just a note to let you know that I am still hanging in there.

Soon I will be another year older. To be exact, I will be 90 years old. There is no one left that I get in touch with.

I was going to go to the picnic, but I forgot all about it and no one called so it was just as well.

I hope this note will find you in the best of health and happy.

Enclosed is a check...

On the 21 of July my grandson will be here with his family, also the twins; they are 12 years old already.

Love, Aunt Jennie Bilancio

Readers of LaVigna: Maybe this next LaVigna picnic we can all check on another member of the LaVigna family. Perhaps someone needs a ride or just a reminder.

#### A NOTE OF THANKS

From Angelojohn Chianese

As many of my extended LaVigna family members know, the last few years have been a particularly trying time--not only for me, I suppose, but for many of us. Many changes, world-wide crises, loss of loved ones, troubled family situations. For my own part, I was plagued by a persistent and debilitating chronic depression which left me bereft of energy, aimless much of the time and despairing nearly every day for the last 3 years. I would not wish this form of illness on anyone. It is tragic in all its aspects. And yet, I have heard many times the saying "Look for the gift in every grieving." I looked and looked with no success for what seemed forever and too long. At a certain point, I resigned myself (Continued on page 7)



Anthony and Angelo Chianese receiving onion and arugola blessings from Giuseppe Bilancio (about 1981 or 1982)



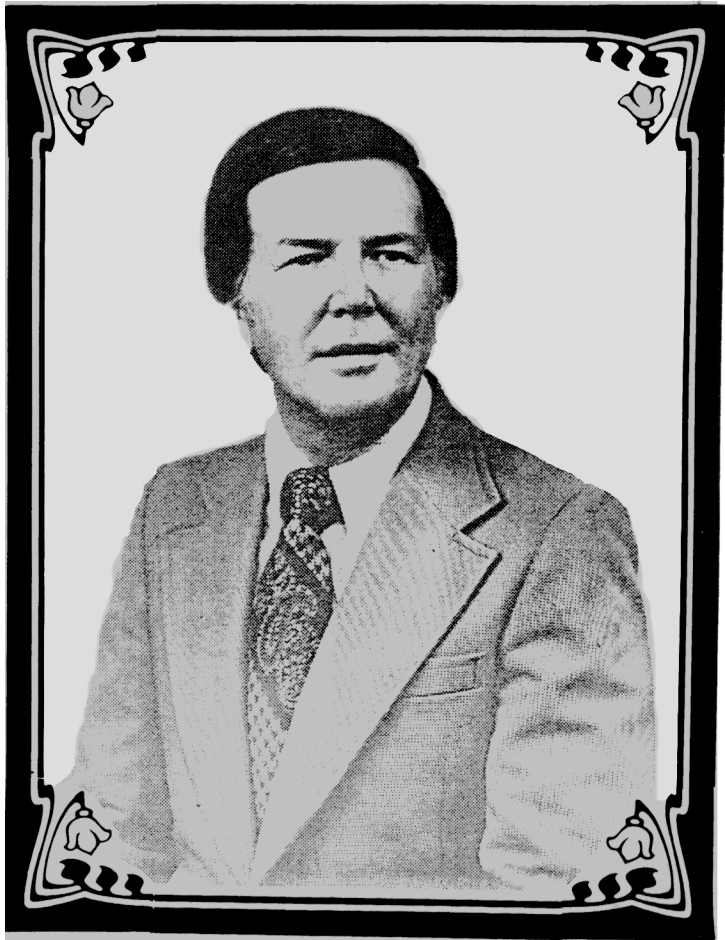
Giuseppe Bilancio explains the arugola planting procedure to Tony Chianese.

#### ARUGOLA - SPECIAL OFFER (continued from page 1)

family in the future, continuing a long-standing Casandrino family tradition.

I will mail you a minimum of 100 seeds and instructions on planting. Since arugola likes the cold weather, you can plant early in spring, harvest and replant into the fall. This year my dad Tony and I planted 3 crops. We both spent many hours collecting and winnowing the seed pods. We invite you to join the circle.





**Dr. Vincent Michael Acquaviva**

By Dean Acquaviva

On May 30th, 1994 Vincent Michael Acquaviva departed from this world of the physical and moved on his way into life's great journey. Fondly remembering Vincent are his loving and lovely wife, Betty M. Acquaviva and his immediate family, daughter Betty Lynn Thomas, and sons Dean Vincent Acquaviva, and Drew Anthony Acquaviva.

Born in Trenton of working-class immigrants who were first generation Italian-Americans, my father

strove in every way he could to free himself and his fellow Italians of the stereotypes imposed on the poor but honest laborers that populated the Chambersburg streets of the nineteen-twenties. He was of a generation of young men and women who would go places their parents could only dream of going; they became professionals: doctors, lawyers, architects, educators.

He made his dream come to fruition in ways even he dared not imagine as a youth--with hard work, perseverance, and sheer will power. He worked as a teacher at the junior high and high school level in Trenton, and was Principal in South Plainfield before moving on to the NJ State Department of Education, where he coordinated the math curriculum for the entire state of New Jersey. His career was marked by awards, papers and books that he authored and edited, and many speaking engagements for professional education organizations.

Anyone who knew him could not help but think of golf whenever they thought of my father. It was his great release as well as his relentless mentor; the game taught him things about life the way metaphors often can. He learned to always give all you are capable of, then question what else you might have done better. He learned how to win graciously with even the poorest of opponents and how to accept your defeats in ways that made you a better person. Most of all he learned how to love life itself with a passion that couldn't be dimmed by anything mortal, and to appreciate the small gifts life bestows on us when we least expect them.

Vince, you've left me some big shoes to fill, and I don't know if it's even wise to try; but more importantly you've left me a legacy of love that came from you so naturally most people were ill equipped to describe it other than refer to your sense of pride, loyalty, and humor.

I'm sure going to miss you, dad,  
and I promise, no nonsense.



## ITALY - 1995

The Kutztown University International Studies Program in Italy has announced its plans for the summer of 1995 and is now accepting applications. Each year participants travel to a different Region of Italy to study its Art and Culture. In 1995 the program will be divided into three Divisions leaving on three consecutive days and returning in the same manner: May 25, 26, 27 - June 13, 14, 15. The site for the Study Program will be the Province of Ravenna in the Emilia Romagna on the Adriatic coast; accommodations are set in Milano Marittima directly on the Adriatic Sea. Participants will have free access to a private beach.

Ravenna is renown for its Byzantine history and its rich concentration of Byzantine Art. Other towns in the immediate area, and all accessible by public transportation are Bologna, Ferrara, Faenza, Rimini, Forlì, Modena, Reggio Emilia, etc. The Art Division will spend the final week in the area of Venice and Padua.

The course offerings for 1995 in the three Divisions consist of three Art

courses: a history course of the Byzantine period, a Plein Air Seascape Painting class, an Architectural Drawing class, three Music courses: a course called "The Violin in Italy", a course in Music Composition, and a course on the European Influences on American Jazz; three Related Arts courses: a Literature course on Dante, a Psychology course which will analyze the Jungian Symbolism in early Christian Art, and a Cooking class in the cuisine of Emilia Romagna. Also offered is an Opera Workshop of Opera International with the legendary soprano Antonietta Stella and visiting artist Giuseppe di Stefano.

Applicants may enroll for only one class. Classes are strictly limited to twelve participants and may be enrolled for either credit or audit. However, all applicants are expected to attend classes and participate in class related excursions. The cost of the trip is \$2400 and includes airfare, hotel accommodations, all meals, connecting group transportation in Italy, three credits or audit of one class.

FOR FURTHER INFO contact Dr. S. J. Bellardo, Kutztown U, Kutztown PA 19530

## FROM THE ENGINEERS TO THE PROVOST MARSHALL HEADQUARTERS IN ROME

( Part 1 )

In the middle of August, '44, on the southern outskirts of Cecina on via Aurelia, we were bivouacked in an orchard of apricots, each tent under a tree. The fruit was ripe and the aroma inviting, but the soldiers ignored them. The landlady and her children, the sole occupants of the large adjoining villa, were short of food. They were the only ones who had not been driven out by the Germans who had occupied the building before us.

The children hung around the periphery of our camp entranced by the way we were living and by our food. At meal time they stood beyond the chow line with pails which we filled. What was strange, however, was their clothes. They came to beg all washed and in their Sunday best.

One of the children, a boy about three years old, was excited about us, and could be found even on rainy days around our tents. We adopted him and named him Nino. One day he showed up with a paper helmet and a stick for a rifle and guarded the entrance to our camp.

One of our soldiers gave him a real helmet, not the plastic liner, but a heavy steel helmet, which had been left behind by one of our casualties.

Little Nino would not take it off. By afternoon his neck muscles hurt and he walked with his head wobbly from the weight. His mother complained, but couldn't stop him.

Late one morning a bedraggled, exhausted, hungry and dirty Italian soldier arrived. He had been with a band of returning soldiers from the north whom he had left sleeping near the town of Vinci, where Leonardo was born. He had walked all the way from Russia through Rumania and Yugoslavia and couldn't sleep so close to home, so he had continued all night long. He was the owner of the villa.

His family had not heard from him for two years.

Nino was on guard and was the first to see him, but didn't recognize him. He saw that he was not an American soldier and said, "Stop," pointing his stick at him menacingly.

His father lifted him up and as he carried him to the villa he tried to kiss him but the helmet got in the way. His father was crying but Nino held his helmet on his head with one hand and his rifle with the other. He looked puzzled but did not cry.

The father knew very little English and nothing of what had happened to his home and family in those two years. I was anxious to hear about his adventures with the Italian Eighth Army in Russia and he was interested in knowing what had been happening in his country. So we had much to talk about. He was a doctor, and had been called up with the mobilization of the Army and sent to the Russian Front in July, 1942.

The cellar had been filled with barrels of wine and olive oil. The Germans had taken away the wine, except for a cask that had looked and smelled oily, but contained wine. The doctor traded his wine for atabrin and penicillin, which was not exactly according to regulations. In the meantime I tried the fruit of each tree, each variety of apricot having a different aroma and taste.

Nino was standing guard one morning when his doctor father came out to give him medicine. Nino saluted smartly, so smartly that he stuck his thumb in his eye. His father returned the salute, and said as he filled a tablespoon, "Now be a brave soldier and show how you take your medicine." "Soldiers don't take medicine," Nino asserted. Nevertheless, from accustomed obedience when the spoon approached his mouth, he opened it and swallowed.

"The medicine is spoiled," said Nino. "Before it tasted better." "That was a different medicine," the doctor explained. But Nino closed his mouth firmly when the spoon was offered again.

Since my presence might be embarrassing, I walked away. The last I heard was "E diamo ancora una bevutina. Coraggio" (Let's give it another sip. Courage!)



A few days later about 4:30 A.M. a soldier stuck his head into our tent and said, "Does Corporal Billyanko sleep here?" I was startled, and a hundred thoughts rushed through my mind. Was it the CIC? But the soldier was not an M.P. "What do you want?" I asked.

"Is your first name Lewis?" he asked, shining the flashlight in my eyes. "Yes, what do you want?" "Pack up. You're shipping out," he responded. My tent mates were wide awake, and the sergeant was being followed by a group of curious fellow soldiers who had been awakened before he had hit upon the correct tent, and who knew that I had previously been arrested as a spy.

"Where to?" I asked.

"I'm Sergeant Hendrix and I run a courier service." He shook my hand. "We're going to Rome." My heart gave a jump of joy, but then I realized that in Rome there was an even larger Questura, and also the CIC, and it might be only the first stop of a longer trip.

"Where in Rome?"

He peered at a piece of paper and read, "The Orient." The Orient at this time was the most dangerous place in the world for a soldier to be. My heart plunged. Why in the hell would the army pick me out of the 337 Engineers to go to the orient?

My tent mate, Red, who hadn't been sleeping too well, said "It's that judo, Shorty."

Sergeant Hendrix put his flashlight closer to the paper to see how the orient could be in Rome, but my bunk mate, Pike, who had a flashlight under his pillow so he could read his letters under the covers, leaned over from the top bunk, added his light to Hendrix's and read "The Albergo Oriente, wow! That's a hotel."

"We're waiting," said Sergeant Hendrix. In minutes all my possessions were thrown into my barracks bag, and my rifle consigned to the supply sergeant Blake who was waiting outside the tent.

My tent mates congratulated me, and Bigelow who owed me \$25 borrowed it from Nappy and paid me back, to my surprise. I looked Pete straight in the eye and saluted him. He reached for the keys in his pants which were hanging on a bunk corner post, but before he retrieved the flying goose\*, I was already outside carrying my bag to the truck. Hendrix helped me aboard.

The few soldiers outside the tent waved and I waved back. Pete had found his keys and Handy and I exchanged salutes. I was sorry to leave in such a hurry. My heart was full of mixed emotions. There is something about army comradeship that defies explanation. Here also was the Italian doctor to whom there was so much to say and from whom there was so much to learn. I resolved to come back, but I never did.

The villa, the tents under the trees laden with yellow-orange fruit, the soldiers waving made a picture which shrank until a cloud of dust raised a screen upon the past.

To our right the pink line of dawn on the horizon was reflected in the Ligorean sea as we drove down the Via Aurelia sitting on benches in an open truck. Every kilometer of that ride toward Rome is etched among the happiest of my memories. The rows of cypresses escorting driveways to hilltop villas or the little villages clustered there. The ugly ruins of battle-scarred Grossetto were quickly passed. The overpass we had built at Civitavecchia to carry the military traffic from the port became a work of art.

I pointed at it and yelled to my truck mates, "We built it in two days!" The message was lost in the wind - but I had declared it to my forbearers, the Ancient Roman Engineers. I was never more proud to have been a member of a construction regiment. But the sun rising for another sultry August day was for me illuminating the beginning of a new life.

\*Pete was a ventriloquist. The "flying goose," which hung in his key chain was a four-inch metal model of a penis with wings which he had picked up in Pompei. He had named it "Handy Grenade" and used it as a medium for his ventriloquism.





Beatrice Johnson and Clora Acquaviva vacation in Bath, NY with their brother Terry Bilancio. Photo was taken by Willie Bilancio at their favorite breakfast spot.

ANGELO CHIANESE (continued from pg 3)  
to the obvious. I was a depressive personality, out of energy and on my way down. The daily obituary pages became my literature of choice--comparing the ages of the pre-maturely dead to my own and imagining how our similar characteristics would soon transform me into one of their subterranean neighbors.

Well, the proverbial light at the end of the tunnel has at long last appeared and I am taking this space to offer thanks and advice (more thanks than advice, because of the two expressions thanks is by far the more important).

First, the advice. In the words of Winston Churchill on the occasion of his delivery of the shortest university commencement speech in history: "Never, never, never, never give up!"

Finally, the thanks. To this moment, I still do not understand the "why" or "how" of what has happened to me. Genes, diet, chemical imbalance, emotional distress, heredity, overwork, lack of communication, whatever--I don't really know. The factors that seem present in the shift from dispondency to enthusiasm include diet changes, new environment, psychotherapy, medication (Prozac to Zoloft--12 weeks for impact), grace (the work of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit), and, most important, the constant and tenacious love and support of friends and family, that is, God working through her sons' and daughters'

the life-saving value of that love. I was numb and unable to feel it most of the time that it was being sent, given and poured into me. But it is now working its miracles within me--healing mind and body and spirit (yes, my immune system was greatly affected by the depression and all kinds of ills and sores manifested. They are now disappearing).

I have no possible way of thanking all who have contributed to my healing. And yet, for my own peace of mind and as an encouragement to any of my brothers and sisters, cousins and friends who may be experiencing anything like this, I will say, "Thank you so much" in random order to: My dear cousin Fran Bilancio, who phoned me regularly from Michigan to cheer me, to listen, to remind me to hang on, to coax a laugh...

Bob Chianese in Ventura CA who likewise called with regularity to respond to my insistence on "impossible" with the assurance of "quite likely"...

My brother Mick, who never, never, never, never gave up on me.

My father Tony, who opened up his heart and home and turned the inconvenience of my stay at 82 Morton into a blessing...

Samarah Bellardo, who continues to inspire me with apples, peaches, berries, walks together, the poetry of his soul, his unshakable faith in the creator's gifts, his moral fortitude and his partnership in life, his loving and twinkling eyes...

My sister Lilia, her smiles, her compassion, her tears and laughter; for holding my hand; for listening...

I am painfully aware at this point that LaVigna is only a few-page vehicle and that I could use about double its size to be complete in my thanks. And, therefore, to those of you who know how long and hard and lovingly you all stood with me, thank you and I love you--Aunt Jane, Clora, Bea, Terry and Willie Bilancio, Angelica Roberts, Ivan Bilancio, brother Chris and Elaine, Carolyn MacLeod, Lewis Bilancio, Corinne and Gloria, Bob and Jennie Immordino, Lorraine Anthony, Angelo Josephson, Joe Ott, Judith Gross, Uncle Pat, Louis G. & Rose Bilancio, Leo & Dorothy, Uncle Al, Grandpop Joe Bilancio' and the arugola seeds, Pauline Chianese, Julianne and Beatrice Wiesner-Chianese, Mark Bezanson, Renate Novak, Greglynn Weaver and the Peace Weavers, Bhante (106 and growing), Carol Buck, Dan Blair, Catherine Judd, David Darling & Music for People, Cindy Chianese, Bud Sciscio, Paul Cerna, Judy Steel, Buddy, Lucille Pack, Nick Weingarten, Kirk Hall, John Cox, Louise Ungrady, my mom, Aunt Lena, Aunt Sue, Lucy Gervasio, Joe & Terri Guerra, Bernice Smailen, Ralph & Diana, Sandi Remboske, Jim Grainger, Coco, Sylvia, Bob Roth, Robert Bly, Jesus, Buddha, Nana, Giovanni Manganelli, Uncle Mike, George Wiesner, Uncle Flower, Bill Kocis, and my faithful wife Bobbi, who bore the burden of uncertainty, fear and anguish every day and still cared lovingly for our two beautiful daughters and refused to give up on me. There are at least as many not mentioned as are listed above.

In closing, I would like to tell you what a great comfort it is to have a venue such as LaVigna to share these thoughts and feelings. We, as individuals, are all different, it seems, but, at the core, we

## LA CUCINA

It's tomato time and here is a great recipe to enjoy. It was used time and time again by our mothers and grandmothers. It was economical and delicious and still is.

PEASANT BREAD

Stale (hard) crusty Italian bread  
Olive oil (Extra virgin preferred)  
Tomatoes (Ripe plum halves if available)  
Basil or oregano  
Garlic

Wet bread to soften a little. Place tomatoes and bread (split in half) on cookie sheet. Drizzle olive oil on the tomatoes and bread. Add garlic (cut fine) and salt and pepper to taste. Add bruised and chopped basil or dry basil (Oregano may be used).

Put in heated oven (approx 375 to 400)  
Bake until tomatoes soften and bread has a golden crust.

(Jennie Immordino)

## THE LION KING

Did you know that we have a celebrity in the family?

Ivan Bilancio, son of the late Dorothy and Leo Bilanco, is the Editor of the famous Disney movie **THE LION KING!**

If you haven't seen the movie yet, go and look for the credits... There you will see our own Ivan Bilancio - Editor.

Ivan and his lovely wife and daughter, Gloria and Leah, visited recently and attended our family picnic in July.

## ANGELO CHIANESE (Cont'g from pg 7)

are all one. Globally, LaVigna provides an opportunity to begin or re-begin over and over to hone our skills as people touching people, as community reaching out. The gift of my process is clear to me: We all need one another. May today be the start of a whole new life for you and me. God bless us all.

LA VIGNA  
90 EGGERTS CROSSING RD  
LAWRENCEVILLE NJ 08648